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by JWF NARA Date 9/30/97

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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November 19, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER
SUBJECT: My Visit to China

Overview

The four-day visit to the People's Republic of China was a positive success on all planes. The two and three-quarter hour session with Chairman Mao (the fact that it was the longest session with a foreign official in recent years is of itself very significant); fourteen hours of private meetings and several more of informal conversation with Prime Minister Chou; additional talks with Vice Minister Chiao Kuan-hua on sightseeing tours; and six hours of counterpart meetings on technical bilateral issues added up to the following:

-- Confirmation and deepening of the close identity between you and the Chinese leaders' strategic perspectives on the international situation. As I pointed out after my February 1973 trip, we have become tacit allies. We share essentially the same views about the Soviet strategy (though the Chinese are firmly convinced of Soviet hegemonic ambitions while we still hold out the possibility that our combination of firmness and negotiation can steer Moscow on a constructive course); the necessity of a strong American world role and defense capability; and the strategic importance of Europe, Japan, the Middle East, and the Near East-South Asia axis.

-- A positive joint communique that expands our existing bilateral relationship and establishes the framework for further forward movement. The key element in the document--indeed the most significant development of the visit--is the breakthrough proposed by Chou on Taiwan that requires only that the "principle" of one China be respected as we normalize relations. We now have to explore how to give concrete expression to this concept which could provide an opening for maintaining a substantial bilateral tie with Taiwan as and when we establish diplomatic relations with the PRC.

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-- Clear statements on Mao and Chou of support for your firm diplomacy and their strong hope that you will surmount domestic difficulties. They were scathing in their criticism both of the neoisolationists in the United States and those whom they consider are exaggerating and exploiting Watergate to attack you.

-- Recognition by the Chinese of your position that a military flareup in Indochina will have adverse effects on our mutual interests. Chou strongly suggested that they have throttled way down their assistance to North Vietnam and Cambodia. He stated that there would be no major offensive in South Vietnam in the near term. On Cambodia, the Chinese seemed content to let the parties further exhaust themselves on the battlefield to get into a negotiating mood; he did not pick up my offer to listen to their (or Sihanouk's) ideas on a settlement.

-- A continuing warm reception for our party, including truly major coverage of our activities in the Chinese press.

Progress with Some Caveats

These elements constitute substantial forward progress. The driving force on the Chinese side remains their preoccupation with the Soviet Union which infuses their discussion of every major international issue. Their crucial calculation is the steadiness and strength of America as a counterweight. In this regard your strong handling of the Middle East, particularly the alert, - Chou called you more courageous than President Kennedy as a leader - was an ideal prelude to my visit. It served the same purpose that your policy during the 1971 Indian subcontinent did in the period between my first trip and your summit conversations.

Your strong policies, the Chinese concerns about encirclement, our developing mutual trust and reliability the past few years, our profound exchanges at the highest levels have all combined to move us forward at a steady pace. In addition, the two major obstacles to improvement in relations have been eased: last January's Vietnam settlement all but removed Indochina as an impediment, though Cambodia is a lingering problem; and the Chinese continue to show patience on Taiwan and may have supplied us with a breakthrough on this trip with their one China principle formula in the communique.

We cannot by any means be complacent about our relationship, however. The following caveats are in order:

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-- The Sino-Soviet Split. We have been in probably the ideal situation with regard to the two communist giants: they both want and need to deal with us because they cannot deal with one another. We are walking a delicate tightrope of public detente with Moscow and tacit alliance with Peking. This will continue to require the most careful handling. The meticulous care and feeding of the Chinese on our Soviet policy has paid off, but Peking sees our detente pursuit as at least objectively threatening its security, whatever our motives. And even if we don't make mistakes, events beyond our control could turn one or the other against us or propel them toward each other.

-- The U.S. Domestic Scene. Our domestic situation clearly troubles the Chinese. For the short term they are worried about the attacks on you and hope you will overcome them. More fundamentally, they are wary of our domestic and Congressional mood which they see potentially leading to American disengagement from the world. Once they become convinced that we cannot or will not act as a major force on a global scale, we will lose our principal value to them. In this case, Taiwan and other bilateral pursuits notwithstanding, they would be likely to explore other alternatives.

-- The Chinese Leadership Succession. Mao and Chou both looked well and demonstrated their usual mental prowess (Mao more than ever). But they are old, and there appears in any event to be some domestic challenge to them, though probably mostly on domestic issues. We just don't know much about their politics -- nor does any other outside country. We have no idea who will succeed the present leadership or what their foreign policy tendencies will be. The one element we can be certain of is that they will not be as far-sighted or as sophisticated as Mao and Chou, who may well be the most impressive twosome in history. A worrisome aspect is the fact that on all our trips we have dealt with a restricted circle of Chou and his lieutenants. We have had virtually no contact with other elements of the political leadership, such as the Shanghai radicals. Since a reasonable case can be made for accommodation with Moscow or some other option than their present course, we have no assurance that the PRC will continue its policy toward us when Mao and Chou depart. This puts a premium on solidifying our relationship while the current leadership is directing their policy.

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The Joint Communique

As I have already reported, the communique we issued is a positive document and contains a possible breakthrough on the fundamental question of Taiwan.

The Shanghai Communique established a framework and principles for our relationship. Since your trip we have given these concrete expressions. This communique further accelerates momentum in these areas:

-- It expands the principle of opposing hegemony from the Asia-Pacific region to "any other part of the world." This reflects our parallel strategic interests and sends some clear, though sufficiently muted signals to Moscow."

-- We have extended the process of consultation "to maintain frequent contact at authoritative levels" and "to engage in concrete consultations". In addition to suggesting closer collaboration in general, it balances off somewhat our consultation procedures with the Russians under the Agreement to Prevent Nuclear War.

-- We have agreed to expand "the scope of the functions of the Liaison Offices". This will result in larger missions performing wider tasks. They are becoming embassies in all but name.

-- We will work for the further development of trade. This has already reached the level of some \$900 million in exports to the PRC (and less than \$100 million Chinese export to us). We made major progress on the principal technical issues which should expand trade further.

-- We have arranged "a number of new exchanges for the coming year." This program is important both substantively in promoting mutual knowledge and awareness, and symbolically in highlighting the progress of our relations.

In addition, Chou tabled language that provides the framework for the central bilateral problem in the coming period, Taiwan: "... normalization of relations between China and the United States can be realized only on the basis of confirming the principle of one China." This suggests that we might be able to continue a substantial relationship with Taiwan when

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we establish diplomatic relations with Peking so long as we maintain the "principle" of one China. They may be willing to settle for considerable autonomy for Taiwan and continuing U.S. ties so long as the nominal juridical framework reflects the one China approach. Our task now is to come up with some formulas that can begin to move toward this goal. They are clearly ready to hear from us; I said that we would get back to them within a few weeks.

Thus once again the Chinese have demonstrated their patience and shrewdness with respect to this delicate issue. Just as the Shanghai Communique formula allowed us to launch our bilateral relationship so may this one allow us to proceed eventually to diplomatic relations while continuing close ties (as yet undefined) with Taiwan.

More generally, this communique follows the pattern of previous ones by fleshing out the framework already established and shaping a fresh framework for the next stage.

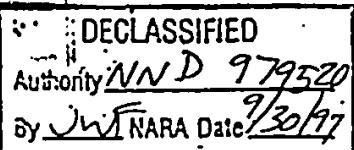
The Meeting with Mao

I have already sent you the highlights of this extraordinary session. The Chairman looked much healthier and thinner than last February when in turn he looked much better than during your trip. (It is now clear in retrospect that he was quite ill when you saw him.) He moved and walked unaided and used his hands continuously and expressively as he talked in his slow, low, gravelly tones.

Mentally he was extremely impressive, improving his previous performances. He led the conversation, covered all major international issues with subtlety and incisiveness and an unerring knack at striking the essential chords in a seemingly casual way. By the time he was finished he had sketched their strategic vision comprehensively and laid down the essential elements of their policies region by region. He went from issue to issue in an ostensibly random, but always purposeful, manner. And all of this was done without a single note of his own or prompting by Chou, who once again was clearly deferential in his presence.

The Chairman obviously enjoyed himself. Throughout he employed his earthy phrasing and bawdy humor to illustrate a point or color a tone; the females present laughed easily, almost coquettishly and were again at ease in his presence. After the conversation had gone beyond one and

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three quarters hours, several on the Chinese side looked at their watches and made tentative moves to close out the meeting, but Mao prolonged the talk and toward the end engaged in exchanges on philosophy.

Indeed one of the striking aspects of the visit was the fact that this time Mao presented the bulk of the Chinese positions while Chou generally stuck to details and asking questions and making comments on our positions. Before, Chou had taken his cue from Mao but made extensive substantive presentations of his own.

The Chairman was vigorously supportive of you, as I have reported. He praised your strong policies, singling out the recent alert and Middle East policy generally. He found your actions much firmer and steadier than the Cuban missile crisis scenario.

He discussed the Watergate events in bawdy fashion, calling it no more than a breaking of wind (the interpreter had amusing difficulty). He considered the incident meagre, yet much chaos was being made of it and "we are not happy about it." He pointed out that other domestic policies, especially economic, were going well. I assured him you would surmount your current troubles and explained the domestic political tides.

Mao was also concerned in general about trends in America toward disengagement. He asked me if we would revert to isolationism if the Democrats took office. I said that many (not all) of them would want to move in that direction but objective reality would prevent them at some point; the problem was how much damage would already have taken place before they checked this trend. On the whole I thought that future Administrations would have to pursue the same general course, though perhaps in less complex fashion than your tactics. I emphasized that in any event these concerns pointed up the need to solidify U.S.-Chinese relations now so there would be no alternative for successors.

The world wide preoccupation with the Soviet Union once again dominated his conversation. Almost every subject was linked to this theme. He painted the global Soviet threat and recounted how he had contemptuously rejected their offers, direct and through emissaries, for improved relations. I rehearsed our own, less direct policy with Moscow. The Chinese still remain somewhat suspicious of our approach, especially of the objective dangers of false detente; the Chairman compared our policy to shadow-boxing in contrast to their more straightforward opposition. I also

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also acknowledged that the Soviet threat to China seemed to have increased since my last visit. I repeated our opposition to these pressures and the dangers we saw in a Soviet attack. He made clear that they didn't want a war but were prepared if necessary.

Indeed, Mao seemed basically optimistic about containing the Soviet Union, citing his familiar axis of potential or tacit allies in China, Japan, the United States, Europe and the Near East-South Asia axis. He again stressed the importance of our working closely with these countries— maintaining close ties with Japan; keeping our military presence in Europe; and countering Soviet influence in the Middle East (as we were now doing), Pakistan, Iran, India, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. I outlined our efforts to support these various countries; offset Soviet influence; maintain a strong national defense; keep forces in Europe; anchor Japan securely, etc.

We discussed several specific countries. He was very worried about Soviet influence in the radical Arab states, especially Iraq. He applauded your efforts to increase our influence in the region. He criticized their Chief of their Liaison Office in Washington for his recent lecture to me on the Middle East which rehearsed their standard pro-Arab line. The Chairman made clear that Ambassador Huang should have comprehended the more important U.S.-Soviet strategic aspect of the regional conflict.

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Mao was both patient and somewhat inscrutable on Taiwan and diplomatic relations. He said that the Taiwan issue "is not an important one; the issue of the overall international situation (i.e., the Soviet Union) is an important one." The PRC would not rush us on this question or that of diplomatic relations, he stated. After all, their relations with us were better than those with countries like the USSR and India, with whom they have diplomatic ties; the Liaison Offices "could do." But Mao also made some elusive references (including on maintaining ties with the Soviet Baltic states) that suggested flexibility to allow us to move more rapidly. I followed up for clarification with Chou, and we emerged with the language in the Communiqué.

Mao strongly suggested that they would not use force against Taiwan, pointing to their restraint on Macao and Hong Kong. He didn't believe in peaceful transition with the counter-revolutionaries, but Peking could wait 600 years to absorb the small island. In any event the question of relations with us should be separated from this issue and shouldn't take so long.

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I will shortly send you the full transcript of this remarkable conversation.

Meetings with Chou

I have already given you the highlights of my conversation with Chou. They were stimulating, and he was impressive as always, but his role was considerably more subordinate to Mao's this trip. As I have indicated in earlier reports, our first meeting was taken up largely by my presentation of our position on major international issues, with Chou commenting and probing. The second session was largely a holding action of questions from him while they prepared for my meeting with the Chairman. And the meetings on the final day largely consisted of his elaborations of Mao's basic lines; sensitive exchanges about the strategic international scene; discussion of bilateral matters, including trade; and negotiation of the communique.

Following are the major points that emerged from these sessions:

-- He strongly praised your Middle East policy and our growing dialogue with the Arabs. He indicated he had been helpful with Egypt. He suggested we talk directly to Syria; was suspicious of Iraq; urged inclusion of the Palestinians in the negotiations; and shared our positive view of the Shah. On the alert he compared you favorably with President Kennedy and suggested the incident gave us a chance to increase our defense budget.

-- On Vietnam, Chou said that the North Vietnamese leaders have assured him they have no desire of launching a major offensive. He claimed the material moving south was for rebuilding roads and building up production. From what the Chinese know, Hanoi has no intention of launching a major attack. He alluded to the gradual political evolution that I had told him on previous visits we could live with. I underlined the dangers of a North Vietnamese offensive.

-- Chou declared that their friends in Cambodia were complaining about lack of military support from Hanoi which according to him is "extremely meagre." He didn't foresee major fighting in Cambodia; favored a political settlement; and thought the area should be peaceful and neutral. He also indicated opposition to Sihanouk's return and a Soviet desire to have their "hand in the pile."

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-- Chou pointed to vigorous efforts by Moscow to the south of China. He urged support of Pakistan and approved our building a port there. I reaffirmed our policies and said that we were also trying gradually to improve relations with New Delhi to counter Soviet influence there.

-- Discussion on Korea was restricted to the ongoing discussions in the United Nations. The Chinese had just given us a satisfactory compromise solution in New York and needed time to line up their allies. I agreed that we would work closely with them on timing so long as they stuck by their substantive position.

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-- He thought we should come closer to Japan on defense matters (i.e., the nuclear umbrella) and indicated he agreed that it was preferable for us to join the Japanese in Siberian development than to leave them alone. I emphasized the importance of keeping the Japanese tied to us and not subjected to too many pressures.

-- Chou criticized Allende's rashness in Chile and Che Quevara's adventurism. In response to my comments, he in effect said that the PRC would not cause trouble in Latin America.

-- I went over our Soviet strategy in some detail, including our rationale for the agreement which you had used during the Middle East alert. He continually sounded their by now familiar preoccupations.

-- Chou strongly supported NATO and our troop presence in Europe. He said he would continue to educate European leaders, beginning with Heath who will visit Peking soon.

-- I reaffirmed our intentions on Taiwan in political terms and outlined our plans concerning our military presence.

-- At his own initiative, Chou said he would not attend the United Nations session next fall.

-- I described to Chou, as I did later to Mao, our domestic mood and its impact on foreign policy.

Bilateral Technical Issues

Counterpart negotiations conducted on our side by Acting Assistant

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Secretary Hummel focused on trade and exchange matters.

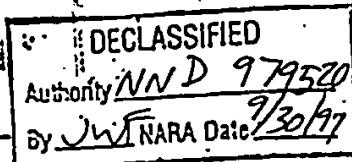
We presented to the Chinese our view of the importance to the evolution of normal economic relations of concluding the private claims/blocked assets problem -- agreed to in principle during my visit last February. In the only harsh aspect of all our discussions (apparently reflecting the acerbic personality of negotiator Lin Ping, formerly Ambassador to Chile during the Allende period and now Director of the Foreign Ministry's Bureau of American and Oceanic Affairs) the Chinese side attacked our proposed technical language defining the source of their blocked assets as being an unwarranted reference to the former "hostile" attitude of the U.S. toward the PRC. More substantively, they demanded that we exclude from the settlement \$17 million blocked in third-country banks, some of which has been repaid indirectly to the PRC despite our warnings to the banks of the illegality of such action. Our side indicated that these positions were unacceptable, primarily because exclusion of the third-country blocked assets from a settlement would reduce the sum of the total available for repaying our domestic claimants to a level unacceptable to the Congress, but as well because of the disastrous precedent for our international banking relations of such actions.

In my final session with the Premier, we made some progress on this matter. I reiterated the desirability of resolving the claims/assets problem, but the unacceptability of the Chinese position on the third-country bank question. We concluded by agreeing to further exchanges on the technical issues in the coming weeks in an effort to reach a final resolution of this matter in about a month.

The Chinese were relaxed about the most favored nation issue. Chou probed about the relationship between the present Congressional obstruction of this aspect of the trade bill because of the Soviet internal scene and extension of MFN to Peking. They do not mind delay. Their only concern is to keep the Soviet and Chinese aspects separate in congressional and public discussion.

Scientific, cultural, and public affairs exchanges were discussed, with agreement reached on twenty specific programs which will be implemented in 1974. Included in this total is a visit to the U.S. by a delegation of Chinese mayors, and acceptance by the PRC of our proposal that a group of American state governors tour China. As well, the PRC proposed another Congressional delegation visit in the summer of next year by a

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bipartisan group of fifteen. We will be presenting suggestions to you shortly on which Representatives and Senators might most usefully be included in this group. (We suggest this trip not be mentioned to members of Congress at this time, as it will generate a flood of requests, making it difficult to organize purposefully a group which will most effectively support your programs).

We also proposed longer-term cooperative programs with the PRC in the areas of agricultural research, earth resource surveying, and language study. They indicated only that they would consider these ideas.

We also requested agreement from the Chinese side to our making a public statement regarding American servicemen missing in action in the vicinity of the PRC as a result of the Indochina hostilities or our past military activities in the Taiwan area. Premier Chou indicated to me that his officials were making a detailed search for information regarding a number of MIAs. He also agreed to our publicly stating that we have discussed the problem of MIAs, that the PRC has been conducting searches, that no new information has been turned up, that they are continuing to investigate, and that they will provide us any new information which comes up. We can release this statement at an early press conference. This should clear the air on a lingering problem of concern to MIA families and their Congressmen.

I raised with Premier Chou the issue of permanent U.S. press representation in Peking. He replied that they saw no problem with our newsmen in their capital; but there is concern with possible awkward confrontations in Washington between PRC newsmen and reporters of Taiwan's official Central News Agency. We will look into ways that this latter problem might be handled and then present further proposals to the Chinese.

Finally, we managed to resolve a potentially difficult issue concerning the U.S. Marine security contingent in our Liaison Office. The Chinese have complained of some of the social activities of the guard, which they feel calls public attention to their presence as a foreign military unit on PRC territory. Their sensitivity seems derived from the historical experience of foreign troops on Chinese soil during the last century which were part of the treaty port system of forced foreign access to the country. Lower level officials had almost demanded that we remove the Marines from China, but in my talks with Premier Chou it was agreed that the guard can remain based on our assurances to keep them low profile.

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We may replace some of the more exuberant of the young men who have proved restive in the austere Peking environment with older, seasoned troops.

The Atmosphere

Our reception in Peking was as cordial as it has been on my last several trips. While the government still does not bring out welcoming crowds, in private contacts they are with few exceptions affable and responsive -- yet never intimate. The Premier sent five officials to Pakistan to escort us to Peking -- three of whom were on my first secret visit -- and held a welcoming banquet on the first night that included, in all, almost 200 people on the Chinese and American sides. I gave a return banquet for the same guests the final night of our visit. Both events took place in the Great Hall of the People and, as during your trip, featured a Chinese military ensemble playing American and Chinese tunes.

Press play of our negotiating sessions was extensive in the PRC's electronic media and newspapers. My meeting with Chairman Mao was given banner-headline treatment, including the Chairman's wish that I convey his greetings to you. Other sessions were also reported on the front page of the Peoples' Daily.

I did little sight-seeing this trip, although a morning's visit to the Temple of Heaven and a walk through the streets attracted a lively and curious crowd. One morning we visited an agricultural commune on Peking's southern outskirts. While this was evidently a model facility and reasonably liveable, it nonetheless gave a clear sense of the limited capitalization of China's farms, the minimal economic amenities of the people, and their enduring burden of physical labor. The second evening we were given a performance of a revolutionary ballet, "The White Haired Girl." This propaganda pot boiler gives depressing evidence of the intellectual impoverishment of contemporary life in the PRC. One sees little evidence in the media or intellectual life of the brilliance and far-sightedness of China's top leaders with whom we deal nor of China's rich culture.

While a comfortably familiar pattern has now evolved in our periodic trips to Peking, and while we now have regularized contacts with the highest leaders in the PRC which -- on the basis of past exchanges of view -- facilitates the development of parallel policies in our international relations, we continue to have dealings with a highly restricted element of

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the leadership. While we have no indications from our talks of tensions and differences of policy orientation among various leaders, signs of conflict and debate persist in the press. Thus, in a situation where we can expect the passing of Mao and Chou in the next few years, there are grounds for concern about the depth and continuity of our relationship.